



Section IV – page 14.

Eradicate the phrase “Mental Retardation” in Michigan law by revising all Michigan statutes that use “mentally retarded” (or variations thereof) and replace it with “developmental disability” (and variations thereof).

- 50 Project UNIFY schools host Spread The Word To End The Word campaigns and R-word campaigns that encourage peers to end the use of the word “retard” or “retarded” as put downs in their school communities.
- SO College groups host Spread The Word To End The Word campaigns on 5 campuses across the state.
- Special Olympics Michigan encourages consumers to take the pledge to end the use of the word “retard” on March 5th, national Spread The Word To End The Word Day by pledging at www.r-word.org
- Through Project UNIFY 26,377 K-12 students were exposed to Spread the Word to End the Word and R-word campaigns which teach students not to use the words “retard” or “retarded” as put downs.

Section IV – page 14

Partner with advocacy organizations across the state and Community Mental Health Service Programs to implement stigma reduction campaigns that will be promoted in various traditional and social media outlets across the state. These stigma campaigns should have a focus on personal stories and peer-to-peer support with an outreach toward their respective community.

- Special Olympics Michigan has the second largest facebook following of any Special Olympics State Program with more than 12,000 followers.
- Special Olympics Michigan utilize the E-spirit newsletter to reach more than 20,000 constituents on a biweekly basis.
- Special Olympics Michigan utilizes twitter to interact with more than 2,600 followers.
- Special Olympics Michigan utilizes Instagram to reach out to 200 followers through photographs.
- Special Olympics Michigan regularly updates www.somi.org with stories and updates for the organization.
- Special Olympics Michigan staff members presented at the Michigan Association of Community Mental Health Boards conference in October.



Section IV – page 14

Collaborate with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and the Department Community Health to develop a Pure Michigan marketing strategy to highlight opportunities for families living with disabilities. It is important that we highlight the beauty of Michigan, along with the state's commitment to ensuring everyone can enjoy it.

- Special Olympics Michigan hosts major state events in 6 of Michigan's communities including Traverse City, Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, Mt. Pleasant, Ann Arbor and Lansing.
- Special Olympics Michigan events provide individuals with intellectual disabilities an opportunity to travel outside of their home community with their families.
- Special Olympics Michigan State Winter Games are hosted at Grand Traverse Resort and Schuss Mountain Ski Resort, two premiere Northern Michigan vacation destinations.
- Special Olympics Michigan spends more than \$820,000 annually in lodging and meals for delegations in the communities where state events are located.
- A study conducted by Central Michigan University showed the economic impact of the State Summer Games to be more than \$1 million in the Mount Pleasant Community.

Section V – page 16

Encourage schools to support programs that help children with developmental disabilities to be accepted by their peers, such as Special Olympics' Michigan Project UNIFY®. More than 60 percent of students with developmental disabilities report being bullied. As such, programs that help all children feel included and give them the respect they deserve are vital in encouraging more inclusive school environments and battling stigma.

- Special Olympics Michigan Project UNIFY is a student leadership program that utilizes Unified Sports which has students with and without disabilities on the same team, Youth Activation Councils comprised of both students with and without disabilities and Spread The Word To End The Word Campaigns and R-word rallies that encourage students to stop the use of the word "retard" or "retarded" as a put down. Combined these three components make for a more inclusive and accepting environment in K-12 schools.
- There are 50 Project UNIFY schools in the state and more than 2,600 students that were part of a Youth Activation Council.
- More than 26,000 students were reached through Spread The Word To End The Word campaigns and R-word Rallies last year in Michigan.
- Special Olympics Michigan Young Athletes Program introduces students to an inclusive environment at a young age.



Fitness & health

- Special Olympics is the largest health care provider for individuals with intellectual disabilities in the world.
- Special Olympics Michigan offers podiatric, physical therapy, audiology, dental, vision, medical physicals, sun safety, bone density, tobacco cessation, nutrition and physical fitness all free of charge to athletes.
- Special Olympics Michigan offers at least one form of Healthy Athletes at each of the 6 state events.
- In 2013 Special Olympics Michigan Healthy Athletes Initiatives provided, 624 athletes free health screenings worth \$395,000 at no cost to athletes or their families.



Project UNIFY[®]

- Overview
- Resources & Contacts
- Project UNIFY Road Map
- Fact Sheet
- Participating Schools in Michigan (2012-2013)
- Starting a Project UNIFY School
- Key Characteristics
- Youth Activation Committee
- Youth Engagement
- Power in Partnerships
- Importance of School Climate
- Special Olympics and Bullying Prevention
- Spread the Word to End the Word
- Special Olympics Reach Report

For more information, please go to:

<http://resources.specialolympics.org/Sections/What We Do/Project Unify/Project UNIFY Resources Homepage.aspx>





What is Project UNIFY?

Special Olympics Project UNIFY® is an education-based project, supported by the U.S. Department of Education that uses the sports and education programs of Special Olympics to activate young people across the U.S in order to promote school communities where all young people are agents of change - fostering respect, dignity and advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics believes that through sports young people can make a difference in friendships, schools and communities.

Including:

- Unified Sports
- Youth Activation Committee (YAC)
- Young Athletes
- Traditional Special Olympics
- Get Into It
- Spread the Word to End the Word

Where?

- Host Project Unify events in your building
- Participate in Unified Sports in local area competitions
- Create a community presence outside of your school

Who Participates?

- Individuals with and without disabilities
- Ages 2-7; Young Athletes
- 8 & over; Unified Sports & traditional Special Olympics

When?

- Kick off rally in the fall
- Unified sports – fall, winter, spring
- R-Word Rally in March
- Youth Activation Committee (YAC) meetings monthly

Benefits of becoming a Project Unify School:

- Change perceptions
- Improve attitudes
- Enhance relationships
- Increase acceptance of students with and without disabilities
- Student leadership

More:

- Aligns with Common Core State Standards
- Training and resources available through Special Olympics Michigan
- Part of a national movement to change school climates

For more information contact:

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Project UNIFY Resources & Contacts



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Websites:

Special Olympics Michigan
www.somi.org

Project UNIFY
www.specialolympics.org/project_unify.aspx

Project UNIFY-Michigan
www.somi.org/Get-Involved/Project-UNIFY.html

Special Olympics Resources
resources.specialolympics.org

Get Into It
www.getintoit.specialolympics.org

Spread the Word to End the Word
www.r-word.org

Find us on Facebook and Twitter!



Search for:



Project UNIFY Michigan
Special Olympics Michigan
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Road Map for Project UNIFY®

Schools participating in Project UNIFY are required to fulfill a number of tasks throughout their project time frame. The requirements are listed below and are specific Elementary, Middle and High Schools.

Elementary Schools should:

1. Appoint a school based liaison to work with your local Special Olympics program.
2. Meet with local Special Olympics program staff for a face-to-face meeting to discuss your specific Project UNIFY program.
3. Submit a monthly log.
4. Teach at least one lesson from the Special Olympics "Get Into It" curriculum to a general education class. These lessons can be downloaded, free of charge, through the Special Olympics International website or obtained from APE Staff.
5. Develop a Youth Activation Committee with students as the key project leaders.
6. Work with your YAC to implement a school wide Spread The Word To End The Word® or Respect activity.
7. Attend at least one local Unified sports event.
8. Implement at least one school-wide activity that promotes Be a Fan™ and/or End the R-Word campaigns.

Other suggestions that are encouraged from every school involved in Project UNIFY are:

- Share photos, videos, and stories of activities and events on a Facebook page.
- Fundraise for local Special Olympics program.
- Participate in Fans in the Stands at a school event.

Middle and High Schools should:

1. Appoint a school based liaison to work with your local Special Olympics program. Meet with local Special Olympics program staff for a face-to-face meeting to discuss your specific Project UNIFY program.
2. Submit a monthly log.
3. Teach at least one lesson from the Special Olympics "Get Into It" curriculum to a general education class. These lessons can be downloaded, free of charge, through the Special Olympics International website.
4. Develop a Youth Activation Committee (YAC) with students as the key project leaders.
5. Work with your YAC to implement a school wide Spread The Word or Respect activity.
6. Work with your YAC to put on a Youth Rally/Youth Forum involving total school population.
7. Attend at least one local Unified sports event.
8. Attend at least one state Unified sports event.

Other suggestions that are encouraged from every school involved in Project UNIFY are:

- Share photos, videos, and stories of activities and events on Area 8 Facebook page.
- Fundraise for local Special Olympics program.
- Participate in Fans in the Stands at a school event.



OVERVIEW

- Special Olympics Project UNIFY® is an education-based project that uses the sports and education programs of Special Olympics to activate young people across the U.S in order to promote school communities where all young people are agents of change – fostering respect, dignity and advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics believes that through sports young people can make a difference in friendships, schools and communities.



PROJECT UNIFY KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Youth Leadership
- School/Community Collaborations
- Continuous Improvement
- Communications
- Professional Development
- Unifying Programming
- Creating Sustaining Relationships

CORE ACTIVITIES

Communication and Engagement: Be a Fan® and Spread the word to end the word “R” word campaigns, school rally’s, social networking and monthly updates

Inclusive Schools: Get Into It™, Partners Clubs, School Enrichment, Youth Summits, Young Athletes™

Inclusive Schools: Unified Sports® including Poly hockey, basketball, bocce, bowling and athletics or Unified Recreational Sports activity such as walking or exercise club or dodge ball leagues

Athlete Leadership & Self-Advocacy: Athlete Leadership Programs, Training and Education, Youth Forums



PROJECT UNIFY OUTCOMES

- The magic of Project UNIFY is manifested in the inclusive friendships formed, seeing paired youth in action as leaders, creating communities of caring and respect.
- Youth become core leaders in their school communities using Unified Sports and Spread the Word to End the Word as the catalyst for impacting change in a school climate.
- Administrators and teachers take the educated risk to support the vision and insight of youth to create inclusive environments in their schools through Unified Sports and youth leadership opportunities with a clear vision of impacting school environments.
- The inspiration and passion that comes from experiencing Special Olympics sports motivates young people to seek a world of unity, and then provides students with and without disabilities with the skills and opportunities to create social change.
- Policymakers and education leaders develop policies and support quality practices to encourage positive school climates with safe and nurturing learning environments for all students.

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Project UNIFY[®] Michigan Schools



January 2014

Ann Arbor Public Schools

Bay City Public

Cedar Springs Public Schools

Dearborn Public Schools

Detroit Public Schools

Dexter School District

Flushing Comm. Schools

Holt Public Schools

Lansing School District

Mason Public Schools

Monroe Public Schools

Saline Area Schools

St. Clair County Schools

Utica School District

Huron High School
 Pioneer High School
 Skyline High School
 Bay City Central High
 Cedar View Elementary
 Edsel Ford High School
 Michael Berry Career Center
 Bunche K-8
 Cody High School
 Dixon K-8
 Fischer Magnet Upper
 Henderson Upper
 A.L. Holmes K-8
 Mann Elementary
 Northwestern High School
 Sampson Webber
 Turning Point Academy
 Dexter High School
 Elms Elementary
 Flushing Middle School
 Washington Woods
 Attwood Elementary
 Cumberland
 Eastern High School
 Everett Performing Arts Academy
 Forest View Elementary
 Gardner Elementary
 Gardner Middle School
 Lewton Elementary
 Mt. Hope Elementary
 North Elementary
 Pattengill Academy
 Pleasant View K-8
 Riddle Elementary
 Sexton High School
 Sheridan Elementary
 STEM Academy
 Wexford K-8
 Willow Elementary
 Mason Middle School
 Monroe High School
 Monroe Middle School
 Saline High School
 Harvest Elementary
 Pleasant Ridge Elementary
 Woodland Meadows Elementary
 Heritage Elementary
 Saline Middle School
 Woodland
 Stevenson High School



"Project UNIFY has taught me how to be an advocate for students with disabilities. This may be my last year at A.L. Holmes in Project UNIFY, but this is not my last year working towards my efforts to help make the Detroit Public Schools and my community an inclusive environment."

-Germun Allen, a student at A.L. Holmes Academy in Detroit, Michigan.

Special Olympics
 Michigan





Starting a Project UNIFY® program in your school is easy.

- ✓ Identify a teacher to serve as the youth activation liaison.
- ✓ Meet with Project UNIFY staff to determine plan for the year and go over policies and procedures.
- ✓ Adult volunteers complete application and online general orientation and protective behaviors found at <http://somi.org/x417.xml>.
- ✓ Meet with Principle or administrator to discuss the program and plan for your school and get approval.
- ✓ Complete plan and application and send to somi.projectunify@yahoo.com.
- ✓ Register for Get Into It™ to receive online curriculum, and activity resources at no cost.
<http://www.specialolympics.org/Sections/What We Do/Project Unify/Project Unify Educator Resources.aspx>
- ✓ Apply with your school to become an official club – not required but suggested for sustainability.
- ✓ Meet with Special Education teachers in your school to determine how all kids will be involved.
- ✓ Recruit student leaders to serve on the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC).
- ✓ Once formed, meet with YAC which determines what activities and unified sports they will participate in.
- ✓ Have students fill out the Project Unify Application to participate.
- ✓ Determine fundraising plan to offset costs of activities and equipment.
- ✓ Join Special Olympics Michigan and Project Unify Michigan Facebook pages.
Encourage students to join, upload pictures and stories regularly.

Special Olympics Michigan – Project Unify
Anne Rogers, Special Projects Manager: (734) 222-8283
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Project UNIFY®

Key Characteristics

Special Olympics
Michigan



Project UNIFY® is committed to ensuring that the following characteristics of effective practice are in place and consistently achieved in schools.

•Unifying Sports Programming

A commitment to bring the diverse programs together focusing on school community and student development.

•Youth Leadership

Young people representing the diversity of the student body are engaged in leadership positions and schools acknowledge that youth leadership is a priority for the schools/programs.

•School-Community Collaborations

Sustainable collaborations exist that mutually benefit the school and the community and are a core element of Project UNIFY® activities.

•Creating and Sustaining Relationships

A commitment to bring youth with and without disabilities together through programs so that all youth benefit and lasting friendships and relationships are formed.

•Communications

The new social networking media to young people is centered to all communication. Quality communications strategies are employed to inform and influence critical education stakeholders. In addition, communication and youth products are shared with networks that offer the greatest opportunity for suggested strategies to be considered and employed.

•Professional Development

Creating structured time for initiative practitioners to acquire and enhance knowledge and skills to effectively implement and sustain quality products.

•Continuous Improvement

Sustainable formal teams focusing on using data for improvement. Teams consist of all stakeholders ensuring that data is analyzed and resulting "improvements" are appropriate and geared to program enhancement.



YAC – Youth Activation Committee

What is a State YAC?

A State YAC is a group of youth comprised of members with and without intellectual disabilities from across the state. This group works together throughout the year to educate, motivate, and activate youth to become agents of change in their communities and advocate for the respect, inclusion, and acceptance of all people, regardless of abilities. The State YAC uses a wide variety of tools to communicate effectively, such as e-mail, conference calls, Facebook, state summits, and state rallies. The goal of the State YAC is to reach out to other youth to help carry out social justice for all people.

Expected Outcomes:

- Youth leadership that collaborates with the YAC's respective State office to carry out Special Olympics initiatives, events, and activities.
- An increase in partnership between youth and adults --to reach out to more people in order to educate, motivate, and activate them to become more involved in Special Olympics and its initiatives.
- Involving youth in leadership to provide innovative new perspectives to ensure the continued success of Special Olympics Michigan.
- Youth will have a better understanding of how to reach out to their peers to engage them to Be a Fan® of Special Olympics!

Typical YAC

- 16-20 members. As close to equal partner-athlete ratio as possible. 50/50 is ideal, but we recognize that this is difficult. Minimum of 7 athletes and 7 partners.
- Ages 16-21 (sophomore in high school up to senior in college).
- Those on National YAC should be on State YAC.

State Rally

- Get other organizations involved.
- Hang posters for advertisement- local schools, community centers, local businesses.
- Talk to state governor.
- Find proper space (school gym, town hall, NFL arena, etc.).
- Band or some form of music- should make us get up and dance. Band made of athletes would be awesome! (i.e., Flame)
- Influential speakers (teachers, athletes, famous people from your state).
- Must be interactive.
- Make it have one purpose - get people wanting to join SO, talk about r-word, get people excited for state games, something like that- but needs to have **one goal**.
- Have beach balls in the crowd to bounce around- could have writing on it, key words promoting your topic.
- T-shirt give away - throw them into the crowd.



YAC – Youth Activation Committee

- Activity in front of the crowd - pie eating contest, 2 groups of people with 2 minutes to decorate a person into a clown and have them do an obstacle course, come up with a slogan and divide crowd into different sections and have them repeat phrase after you and loudest wins a prize.
- Quick video - 3-word if talking about the r-word, PU video if trying to get people to join, make you own!
- Each SO group make a banner.
- Wii - gets people excited and ready to go! Wii sports- to bring in sports aspect.
- Just Dance- any size group can play (just need 2 people to hold the controllers, then everyone can dance along).
- Decorate slushies (have them ready before).
- Grab bag when walking in.
- Towels with slogan or something and then when there are certain songs and stuff you can twirl around.
- Skit Simulation.
- Unified Sports.
- Fans in the Stands.
- Talk about how SO has expanded.
- Fundraising benefits.
- It's Our School, Too!

State Summit Topics

- Develop action plans to bring unified sports to schools through the use of clubs.
- Develop an "r-word" reaction team to positively write to people who use the r-word.
- Develop games that focus on building teamwork and the importance of every person (ex. Obstacle course, mission impossible).
- Educate the participants about social justice, how we can achieve it, and why it is important.
- Share ideas about ways to reverse stereotypical attitudes toward people with disabilities with SO.
- SOGI 101, how to use it in our schools, and how to pitch it to schools.
- Learn about Be a Fan™ campaign and how we can implement it into our school communities.
- Project UNIFY 101.
- Fundraising.



YAC – Youth Activation Committee

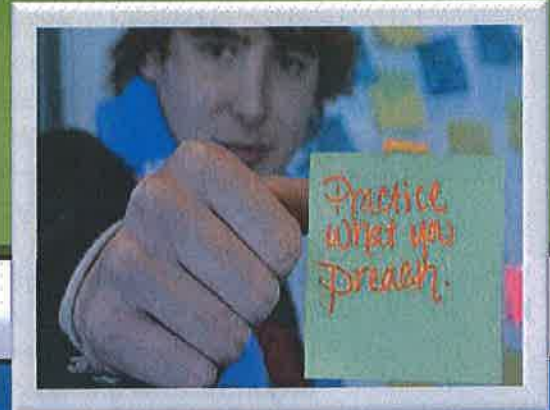
- Networking.
- Plan youth summits, rallies, and gatherings.
- State wide STWTETW strategy and how to publish it.
 - ✓ What can we do in our schools to make this an effective campaign?
 - ✓ What do you think the students and teachers would enjoy learning about?
 - ✓ Resources to include- websites, videos, Facebook pages, etc.
- Work on implementing GII
 - ✓ Make an outline/presentation for students to give to their schools.
 - ✓ Practice presenting for success!
- Recruit other youth to become part of Special Olympics, and possibly the YAC.
- Collaborate with other state YACs and the national YAC.
- Create a YAC website for your state.
- Send out a bi-monthly newsletter about what YAC is doing.
-
- PSA (Public Service Announcement) about YAC to show others- use it to inspire others to join and eliminate the stereotypes.
- Collaborate with other advocacy groups (i.e. Autism Speaks) and youth based organizations (i.e. student council).
- Create programs in schools to promote inclusion (i.e. - Best Buddies, Partner's Club).



Youth Engagement



- Project UNIFY® brings another mechanism to incorporate youth voice and leadership in school climates and at the district and community level to foster the acceptance of their peers with ID and impact attitudes of the entire group. Youth leaders are increasingly viewed as a process that enhances school community change. Improvements of school climate and change also create relationships and professional development for teachers.
- Project UNIFY® will provide teachers and school leaders structured time for initiative members to acquire and enhance knowledge and skills.



Implications for Schools

The best schools are finding that the main factors in improving student learning- especially those youth that are challenged or not working to expectation are those that are moving from a standardized educational program. These schools may not offer every opportunity that schools are known for. Rather, these schools are led by principals and teachers that are focused on student centric learning- where learning is increasingly customized to how each student learns best, where relationships and connections between teachers; students and authentic learning is routine, and where schools are more focused on creating opportunity and expectation for all students, not those who meet the mold of standardized education.

These practices and beliefs include setting high expectations and holding students to them for learning, behavior, attitudes and attention in class and the schoolhouse. Successful educators routinely adjust their teaching and practices with youth so they do learn and behave rather than accepting less than what is right or allowing them to underperform.

They develop and acquire in partnership with youth, learning materials and lessons in place aligned with what is assessed in class, the grade level and school district. They give youth a voice and opportunities to contribute, through service, to their classroom, school and community so we are working together in a relationship of collaboration and authentic- meaningful learning.

Schools and community groups developing youth share a common goal of preparing them for a world, better than what we live in now. We will be living in a world that is better for all if we have an inclusive school environment that fosters equity, justice and engagement so that all students are active principled citizens and leaders today as well as tomorrow. The result is a world inclusive by nature and collaborative by practice. Project UNIFY® commits to these efforts and impacts. As Tim Shriver, Chairman and CEO of Special Olympics recently wrote about the words of his mother, "As we hope for the best in them, hope is reborn in us."



Power In Partnerships



Great things can be accomplished through Project UNIFY® when partnerships are formed within the school community. Some suggestions for partnerships include:

Partner with existing school clubs or student organizations such as student council, Key Clubs, National Junior Honor Society, etc. Members of these organizations can serve as unified partners, volunteers for events, Fans in the Stands at local or state competitions, advocates during R-Word campaigns, etc.



Partner with civic clubs in the community for fundraising, awareness, and volunteer resources. For example, ask a local chapter of a civic club to come to the school once a week to assist with Special Olympics unified and traditional training. Members of the club could then assist with securing a venue for an end of the year competition and supply the refreshments and volunteers.

Partner with a local business in the same capacity as you would a local civic club. Local businesses can become involved with a program a variety of ways which include sponsorship, special events, volunteers for training and competition



Partner with a junior varsity or varsity athletes from the school to assist with unified or traditional sports training/competition. For example, the varsity basketball team could put on a clinic for the Special Olympics basketball team or the varsity team could play the unified team in a fun school event.

Partner with administration and/or the Guidance Office to incorporate your Project UNIFY® goals and programs into the overall school structure and mission. One great example is the establishment of a Unified Sports® PE Class, which should be included in the school's course catalogue. Another example would be including Special Olympics athlete awards at the end of the year sports banquet. This could even include Special Olympics athletes receiving varsity letters for outstanding efforts and accomplishments in sports.

Partner with the local Parks and Recreation Commission for facility use, sports expertise, and additional training and competition opportunities for your athletes.

Partner with a local college or university for a variety of program resources. A local college could host a local competition for multiple schools and provide volunteers for an event. Another way to utilize a partnership with a college or university would be to work with the Adaptive PE or Special Education Department to arrange opportunities for their students to come in to your classrooms and train your athletes in Young Athlete Programs or traditional sports skills sets.

Partner with other schools participating in Project UNIFY® to combine efforts and resources for training and competition events. One example would be planning a unified basketball tournament with three other schools, where all teachers and youth involved work together on the event and give the athletes the awesome experience of competing against other athletes in the area.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE



**Special
Olympics**
Michigan



OVERVIEW

Special Olympics Project UNIFY® is committed to working with Special Olympics Programs to develop school communities where all young people are agents of change by utilizing sports and the programs and initiatives of Special Olympics. In order for Project UNIFY® to be effectively integrated and sustained in a school there needs to be an environment that routinely provides experiences and opportunities for teachers and students to practice respect, dignity and advocacy for all students, including those with intellectual disabilities. Particularly, a school climate that nurtures the characteristics of Project UNIFY® needs to ensure that engaging students with and without intellectual disabilities in Special Olympics sports and competition is a core value and practice; rather than a marginal set of opportunities for some students to experience and enjoy.

WHAT IS SCHOOL CLIMATE?

Let's begin by thinking about climate in ways we are most familiar and that is, in terms of the weather. When it is warm outside, we are usually comfortable and feel good; when the weather turns extremely hot or extremely cold it is less comfortable and requires more effort to feel good; and when the climate is cloudy some individuals feel relief, from the sun, and others feel challenged in anticipation of stormy weather.

In other words, weather-related climate impacts how we feel and our willingness to be engaged. Similarly, school climate impacts how students feel, their willingness to get involved, their excitement to contribute and their sense of self and others. School climate matters and our commitment to broadening the vision of inclusion and engagement requires school climates to reflect the characteristics of respect, equity, dignity, honesty, justice and safety.

If a school climate does not reflect these characteristics it is challenging to integrate and sustain consistent and equitable opportunities for students with and without intellectual disabilities to engage with one another and develop lifelong dispositions and actions necessary to be productive youth and adults.

Project UNIFY® defines school climate as *the quality and character of school life that fosters inclusion, acceptance, respect and human dignity for all students.*

This type of school climate requires the engagement of all education stakeholders, not just students and not teachers alone; but from all administrators, school staff, parents and community partners. Thus every stakeholder is given the opportunity and expected to contribute to creating and sustaining an effective quality school climate.

According to the National School Climate Council (2009) an effective quality school climate includes:

- Norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe;
- Members of the school community who are engaged and respected;
- Students, families and educators that work together to develop, and contribute to a shared school vision; and
- Educators who model and nurture an attitude that emphasizes the benefits and satisfaction that can be gained from learning.

These characteristics accurately describe the foundations of a school environment where Project UNIFY® can thrive. Therefore a school community that values and manifests appropriate and effective engagement leading to inclusion, acceptance, respect and human dignity for all students commits to creating and sustaining policies and practices such as:

- Students with intellectual disabilities are engaged and supported in leadership positions such as student council and school wide or focused advisory groups;
- The school provides quality opportunities for all students (with and without intellectual disabilities) to work together to benefit others within the school structure (e.g., service-learning);
- Students are routinely invited to provide insights into how the school can improve its capacity to effectively serve and engage all students;
- Teachers encourage all students to take risks in their classes to express their opinions about school and social issues;
- Special Olympics programs, sports and competition are easily structured into the school day and school activities as positive elements of a quality educational experience;
- The school highlights through internal and external communications the contributions their students make to the school and community and takes pride in these accomplishments;
- The school welcomes and engages community partners (individuals, businesses, associations and institutions) in mutually beneficial collaborations;
- The schools analyze data from all stakeholders focusing on continually improving their ability to engage all students;

- The school creates specific professional development for teachers, administrators and staff to increase their knowledge and skills to effectively motivate and educate all students to achieve and contribute to their school and community;

- Teachers, administrators and staff respect each student and assist them to achieve, contribute and succeed in school and in life.

These characteristics together establish a set of norms, systems of support, engagement strategies, collaborations and nurturing attitudes that create and sustain a school climate consistent with Project UNIFY® values. The greater the similarities of the quality and character of school life with Project UNIFY® values determines the likelihood of the program's impact and sustainability.

Consider the following example from Maudlin Middle School (Simpsonville, SC).

The school declared the first week of February the "Be a fan of Special Olympics" week. The students were invited to participate in activities, such as a school-wide Be a fan of Special Olympics (SO) poster competition. Young people were invited to be the judges for the contest; they chose a winner for each of the three grade-levels and they were recognized through an announcement at school and at the school basketball game. Every morning, interesting facts and statistics along with SO PSA's were shared during their morning announcements and TV show. All of this lead up to the school's basketball game on Thursday night. The SO basketball team athletes were invited to sit on the bench with the middle school's team during the entire game (the final game of the season), in actual Maudlin Middle School uniforms. The team was invited out to the court during halftime to show off some "moves" for the packed crowd. All of the poster contest entries were hung around the gym, adding to the already fantastic atmosphere. The entire school truly embraced and embodied the spirit of Special Olympics during that special week, and one assumes for months to come.



How Does Project UNIFY® Focus on School Climate?

All Project UNIFY® strategies focus on creating and sustaining a positive school climate that values and manifests appropriate and effective engagement leading to inclusion, acceptance, respect and human dignity. These strategies include students engaged in Unified Sports®; youth leadership; school-community collaborations; service-learning opportunities; improving classroom practice; communications; professional development; and creating and sustaining relationships between students with and without intellectual disabilities.

School climate that supports and sustains Project UNIFY® characteristics to truly activate youth as leaders and change agents is most effectively achieved by engaging youth with and without intellectual disabilities through sports and games. According to Siperstein, et al. 2004, "Providing students with and without intellectual disabilities the opportunity to interact in meaningful ways through activities that highlight their similarities rather than accentuate differences have been shown to be valuable in promoting positive attitudes." These positive attitudes by all school members create environments where "students with and without intellectual disabilities can learn about each other, overcome barriers to acceptance and become leaders for change" (Special Olympics Project UNIFY® Evaluation Report 2008–2009).

Further evidence of creating and sustaining an effective, supportive and respectful school climate is found in the following story.

A school in Nashville, Tennessee has embraced a school climate of inclusion that includes classrooms spaces for all students to work together, share together and learn together. Instead of a strategy that engages special education students into general education classes and all-school activities, the school created opportunities in special education settings to engage all students.

In one setting, students bake and sell cookies to the student body and staff; baking together, selling together and creating friendships. In the Care Bear setting, students with and without intellectual disabilities work together on school assignments, creating friendships and creating a climate of inclusion and mutual respect. The Care Bear setting is also a formal elective for students, thus aligning opportunities with formal course credit.

These opportunities are long-term and permeate the schools climate and in fact we find that younger siblings of previous students engage with these two settings.



What Are The Implications of School Climate Research on Project UNIFY®?

Over the past two decades, there has been a growing appreciation that school climate fosters – or undermines – children's development, learning and achievement. Research confirms what teachers and parents have claimed for decades: a safe school environment, in which students have positive social relationships and are respected, are engaged in their work, and feel competent, is critical for student success.

A growing number of reports, studies and legislation emphasize the importance of positive school climate in reducing achievement inequities, enhancing healthy development, and promoting the skills, knowledge and dispositions that provide the foundation for school – and lifelong – success.

Research also indicates that positive school climate is a critical dimension of effective risk prevention, health promotion efforts, and learning.¹ Recent research reviews have shown that effective risk prevention and health promotion efforts are correlated with safe, caring, participatory and responsive school climates.² Finally, recent studies show that the length of school attendance has the highest correlation with health even after socio-economic status and other variables are taken out. School climate can be argued to be a factor in dropout rates and therefore related to lifelong health.³

One of the fundamentally important dimensions of school climate is relational, i.e., how "connected" people feel to one another in school. In fact, the extent to which students feel attached to at least one caring and responsible adult at school is an area of increased attention among school climate researchers. School connectedness is a powerful predictor of adolescent health and academic outcomes,⁴ violence prevention⁵ and as a protective factor in risky sexual, violence, and drug use behaviors.⁶

School climate also promotes student learning and powerfully effects student motivation to learn.⁷ For example, activities like service-learning and student councils value student engagement and enhance the learning environment by providing students with opportunities to participate in the learning process and construct their own knowledge of social and government systems.⁸

1 Najaka, et. Al., 2002; Rand Corporation, 2004; Wang, et. al., 1993
2 Cohen, 2001; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Catalano, et. al. 2002; Greenberg, et. al. 2003

3 Kolata, 2007.

4 McNeely, et. al., 2002; Shochet, Dadds, Ham & Montague, 2006; Whitlock, 2006.

5 Karcher, 2002a, 2002b.

6 Catalano, et. al, 2004; Kirby, 2001.

7 Comer, 1984; Eccles, et. al., 1993; Goodenow, & Crady, 1997.

8 Torney-Purta, 2002; Homana, Barber, & Torney-Purta, 2006; Youniss et al., 2002.



Moreover, when such activities are presented in a supportive, collaborative environment, they encourage students to build upon one another's ideas on projects.⁹ Together, the experience realistically represents the social situation that they may find themselves part of in the greater civil society.¹⁰ In an overlapping manner, positive school climate promotes cooperative learning, group cohesion, respect and mutual trust.¹¹ Positive school climate, by definition, is characterized by strong collaborative learning communities. Research shows that this improves teacher practice as well as student learning through dialogue and collaboration around engaging classroom practice.¹²

Project UNIFY® benefits from these research findings and at the same time manifests the positive impacts of a school climate that consistently provides experiences and opportunities for students to practice respect, dignity and advocacy for all students, including those with intellectual disabilities.

In fact by engaging students with and without intellectual disabilities through sports and games, Special Olympics Project UNIFY offers researchers and school climate advocates with an effective strategy that can be considered, adopted and/or adapted in most schools.

9 Wentzel & Watkins, 2002.

10 Bandura, 2001, Torney-Purta et al., 2001.

11 Ghaith, 2003, Kerr, 2004; Finnan, et. al, 2003.

12 Talbert, 2002.



What Are The Implications for a Project UNIFY® School?

An effective quality school climate that supports and manifests Project UNIFY® characteristics increases the opportunity during the school day that encourages meaningful interactions among all students. These interactions lead to quality relationships among students with and without intellectual disabilities while at the same time demonstrating to school and community members the contributions all students can make to their school and community.

At the national level, as school climate becomes a more focused element of education reform, Special Olympics Project UNIFY®, can provide leadership to the world outside of and parallel to Special Olympics to demonstrate effective strategies to create the most effective, respectful and safe environment for all students to achieve success in school and life.

At the state level, Special Olympics state leaders and advocates can articulate to state policymakers and education leaders the unique advantage Project

UNIFY® offers to effectively engage students with and without intellectual disabilities through sports and games to enhance the school's climate and increase student achievement and success.

At the local level, Project UNIFY® leaders and staff can demonstrate to district and school leaders that Project UNIFY® not only engages students with and without intellectual disabilities in sports and competition but that such engagement will only be sustained through a school climate that nurtures development, learning and achievement. Further such a school climate engages all stakeholders in more authentic ways providing many benefits to the district and school.

These actions will advance quality school climates that not only support Project UNIFY® characteristics but also provide teaching, learning, serving and interactive environments for students, teachers, administrators, parents and community members to feel connected, safe and successful.

Example of School and Classroom Climate Measures

The following is an example of the type of questions that measure school and classroom climate.

The following statements describe situations found in many schools. Rate how true these statements are in your school.

Use the following scale: 1=false 2=often false 3= sometimes true, sometimes false
4= often true 5= true

1. Students generally treat each other with respect and fairness.
2. Students help each other even if they are not friends.
3. Students who belong to different groups are friendly.
4. Students trust each other.
5. Students and teachers trust each other.
6. Teachers generally treat students with respect and fairness.
7. Teachers are really interested in students and want to help.
8. Students and teachers openly discuss problems.
9. Teachers give students a say in decisions about school rules.
10. Some rules are made by votes by both students and teachers.
11. There is no fighting in this school.
12. There is no cutting classes or skipping school.
13. There no stealing in this school.
14. There is no damage done to school property.
15. There is no use of drugs or alcohol by students in this school.
16. There is almost no verbal abuse or putting people down.
17. There is almost no cheating.
18. Students get a good education and learn a lot.
19. Students learn to become more responsible and caring for other people.
20. Students learn how to speak up and express opinions.
21. Students have a chance to think about real issues.
22. Students learn how to listen to other people's ideas better.
23. Students learn how to take other people's points of view.
24. Students learn to stop and think about things before speaking/acting.
25. Students get a chance for a better future.



Special Olympics
Project UNIFY®

SPECIAL OLYMPICS & BULLYING PREVENTION

Bullying is a problem that transcends geographic, racial, ethnic and economic borders and is an issue closely connected to our movement of acceptance and inclusion that has been going on for the past 44 years at Special Olympics.

Special Olympics believes that positive, supportive and socially inclusive attitudes, policies, programming and resources are the keys to creating safe and accepting school and community climates for all, and provide the best path to prevent bullying and encourage positive behaviors.

While not strictly a bullying prevention program, Special Olympics applauds the efforts of a growing movement among parents and youths to change how bullying is handled in schools, in communities and in society as a whole, seeking to create a safer, more accepting and respectful world for all.

"60% of students with special needs reporting being bullied compared to 25% of general education students."

Statistics like this demonstrate the severity of this issue for the specific population of students with disabilities. In March, the White House hosted a conference on bullying prevention. Tim Shriver, CEO of Special Olympics, **attended the event**, representing the voice of those with intellectual disabilities and the mindset that it was time for a change.

Through efforts such as **Spread the Word to End the Word, Project UNIFY®** and **Unified Sports®**, Special Olympics has actively worked with youth, schools, educators, families and the communities to create climates of inclusion, respect and understanding. These initiatives encourage engagement, character-building and positive youth leadership, and are preventive mechanisms to discourage stigmatizing and abusive language and behavior.

The power of Unified Sports (where students with and without intellectual disabilities compete together as teammates) has extended beyond the playing field. In a 2011 survey, of Special Olympics Maryland high school Unified Partners who observed their teammates with disabilities being bullied or teased, **91% reported standing up for them!** Through Unified Sports, we are taking steps towards more positive and inclusive school environments as young people establish friendships and recognize the value of ALL students!

In discussions related to the topic of bullying in the classroom or among friends, parents, children or students, Special Olympics offers a collection of resources that can help as we all work towards real change in school climate:

- **Project UNIFY Website**
http://www.specialolympics.org/Sections/What_We_Do/Project_Unify/Project_Unify.aspx
- **Get Into It Curriculum**
<https://getintoit.specialolympics.org/>
- **R-Word/Spread the Word to End the Word Website**
<http://www.r-word.org/>
- **New York Times article on Unified Sports (2012)**
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/13/sports/unified-sports-teams-open-doors-for-special-education-students.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
- **Loretta Claiborne: Video on Bullying**
<http://lorettaclaiborne.com/>
- **CNN Health, Kids and Aggression: Popularity Matters**
<http://thechart.blogs.cnn.com/2011/02/08/kids-and-aggression-popularity-matters/>
- **AbilityPath.org report, Walk A Mile In Their Shoes**
<http://www.abilitypath.org/areas-of-development/learning--schools/bullying/articles/walk-a-mile-in-their-shoes.pdf>
- **StopBullying.gov**
<http://www.stopbullying.gov/>
- **National School Climate Center**
<http://www.schoolclimate.org/>
- **BULLY Official Website and Facebook Page**
<http://www.thebullyproject.com/>
- **A Guide to the film BULLY**
<http://www.facinghistory.org/publications/guide-film-bully-fostering-empathy-ac>

You can also join our conversations here on our blog or through Special Olympics and Project UNIFY social channels:

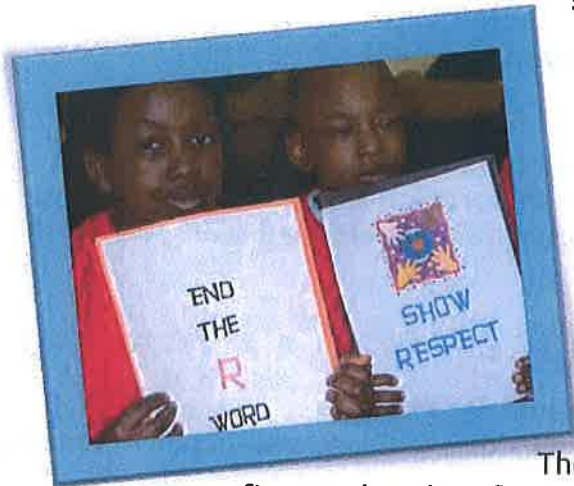
- **Project UNIFY and Project UNIFY Michigan Facebook**
- **Special Olympics and Special Olympics Michigan on Facebook**
- **Special Olympics Twitter**
- **Special Olympics Michigan Twitter @spolympicsmi**





SPREAD THE WORD TO END THE WORD

Spread the Word to End the Word™ is an ongoing effort by Special Olympics and our supporters to raise the consciousness of society about the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the word "retard(ed)" and encourage people to pledge to stop using the R-word.



The campaign, created by youth, is intended to engage schools organizations and communities to rally and pledge their support at www.r-word.org and to promote the inclusion and acceptance of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The official annual day of awareness is held the first Wednesday of every March. While most activities are centered on or near that annual day in March, people everywhere can help spread the word throughout their communities and schools year-round thru pledge drives, youth rallies and online activation.

Spread the Word to End the Word was founded by college students Soeren Palumbo (Notre Dame 2011) and Tim Shriver (Yale 2011) in 2009, and continues to be led by passionate young people, Special Olympics athletes and Best Buddies participants across the United States and in many other parts of the world.

Celebrity activist John C. McGinley is a spokesperson for the campaign.

Respectful and inclusive language is essential to the movement for the dignity and humanity of people with intellectual disabilities. However, much of society does not recognize the hurtful, dehumanizing and exclusive effects of the word "retard(ed)."



It is time to address the minority slur "retard(ed)" and raise the consciousness of society to its hurtful effects.

Visit www.r-word.org to learn how you can **Spread the Word to End the Word™**.



Spread the Word to End the Word Action Kit

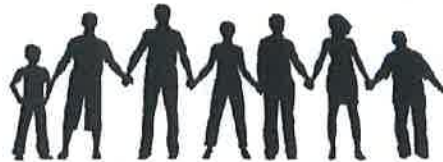
EVENT AND ACTIVATION IDEAS

Spread the Word to End the Word™ relies on grass-roots activities to garner the majority of the campaign's impact. Here are ideas on how you can participate locally in **Spread the Word to End the Word**.

1. Hold a local pledge event at school or in your community. Set up a laptop or tablet to encourage people to sign the www.r-word.org pledge page on the spot and/or create a banner for people to sign on the spot. Invite local Special Olympics athlete Global Messengers or Best Buddies Buddy Ambassadors to speak at an assembly.
2. Work with local sports teams to participate in a halftime event to promote **Spread the Word to End the Word**.
3. Spread the word - samples are on the resources page of our website (<http://www.r-word.org/r-word-resources.aspx>):
 - Use sample leaflets and talking points
 - Hang posters
 - Stickers
 - Send e-mails
 - Text / call your family and friends
 - Create your own **Spread the Word to End the Word Youth Rally**
 - Use your social networks on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Linked In
 - Join Spread the Word to End the Word's social networking pages (see Social Media Activation resource for more info)
 - Send an Evite to friends to take the pledge and spread the word
4. Print and distribute leaflets throughout your community.
5. Notify the press. Call local radio shows and write letters to the editor of your local newspaper using the samples provided in this kit.
6. Post a comment to an online social message board sharing your thoughts about the R-word and its abuse in our society.
7. Create a video speaking out against the use of the R-word, post it online and share it on our Facebook page so we can add it to the growing list of videos at www.r-word.org. Share the link with your friends and family.
8. Post your event's time and location in the community events section of your hometown newspaper or in your school newspaper or Web site. Don't forget to register your event on our website - <http://www.specialolympics.org/RegionsPages/RegisterEvent.aspx>
9. Set up a booth at events or conferences.
10. Contact your local Special Olympics or Best Buddies office to learn how to get involved in **Spread the Word to End the Word** events in your community.



Project UNIFY.



**A positive impact on our children's
educational and social experience!**

93% of PARTNERS say that they gained better understanding of individuals with intellectual disabilities after playing Unified Sports®.

64% of athletes WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES report an overwhelmingly positive change in their self-esteem/confidence after playing Unified Sports®.

37% of ATHLETES WITHOUT INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES report an overwhelmingly positive change after playing Unified Sports®.

47% of ATHLETES with intellectual disabilities reported a positive change in their social skills after playing Unified Sports®.

65% of athletes without intellectual disabilities report positive change in their social skills.





***Special
Olympics
Michigan***

Project UNIFY Dashboard

*Collected through School year (Sep. – June)
fall 2013 data expected February 2014

Numbers gathered from PU school reporting



Performance improving
Performance staying about the same
Performance declining

Special Olympics Michigan Project UNIFY (PU)

Michigan's Project UNIFY Report – Year 5

	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	Progress
Total number of Project UNIFY school districts	1	1	14	14	14	==
Number of counties with Project UNIFY	1	1	10	10	10	==
Total number of Project UNIFY schools	5	5	45	48	50	👍
Project UNIFY Elementary Schools	1	1	18	19	18	👍
Project UNIFY K-8 Schools	3	3	5	9	9	==
Project UNIFY Middle Schools	1	1	9	8	6	👍
Project UNIFY High Schools	0	0	13	12	17	👍
Total number of Project UNIFY Students	100	100	1,474	2,673	*	👍
R-word Campaigns						
Project UNIFY schools hosted R-word campaigns	1	1	45	48	*	👍
Project UNIFY school districts hosting R-word campaigns	5	5	14	14	*	==
Number of students reached by R-word campaigns	N/A	N/A	10,726	26,377	*	👍
Youth Activation Committees						
Project UNIFY schools with Youth Activation Committees (YAC)	5	5	45	48	*	👍
Students participating on YAC	100	100	1,474	2,673	*	👍
YAC meetings held	40	40	225	432	*	👍
YAC activities	N/A	N/A	456	771	*	👍
Participation in Unified Sports – Project UNIFY						
K-12 students participating in Unified sports	100	100	1,474	2,673	*	👍
Project UNIFY schools with Unified Sports	5	5	45	48	*	👍
Project UNIFY Unified Sports activities	5	5	56	82	*	👍
Project UNIFY students that attend State Unified Bocce	0	0	132	128	*	👍
Project UNIFY students that attend State Unified Bowling	0	0	0	262	*	👍
Project UNIFY students that attend State Unified Soccer	0	0	0	24	*	👍

2013 Strand Report

Lansing Public School District

Ingham ISD

Special Olympics Michigan
Project UNIFY



Performance improving
Performance staying about the same
Performance declining

** Information collected by Lansing Public Schools from school reporting requirements in Strand Report*

Statistics from Lansing Public Schools					
	2010	2011	2012	2013	Progress
Graduation rate – Special Education		34.3%	43.7%		
Dropout	31.8%	15.9%	6.2%		
Suspension/expulsion (sep. – dec.)			2,727.5	1,786.5	
Educational Environment -80% or more	31.49%	39.61%	43.7%		
Educational Environment 80 % or more (PU Schools)		44.72%	59.62%		
Special Education Attendance Average	88%	86%	89%		
Project UNIFY Schools Attendance Average	95%		97%		

Impact of Project UNIFY Michigan's Liaison- Reported Data For Year 5

Special Olympics Michigan
Project UNIFY

** Information from Project UNIFY study conducted by University of
Massachusetts through Special Olympics International*

Michigan's Project UNIFY Report – Year 5

	Project UNIFY made a big difference	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Project UNIFY did not make a difference
Providing more sports opportunities for students with ID	31%	21%	38%	7%		3%
Creating a more inclusive climate in the school	45%	28%	21%	7%		
Helping promote leadership and advocacy skills among students with ID	38%	24%	28%	3%	7%	
Increasing participation of students with ID in school activities	38%	28%	31%	3%		
Increasing confidence of students with ID	52%	35%	14%			
Raising awareness about students with ID	55%	24%	14%	7%		
Increasing opportunities for students with and without ID to work together	62%	21%	17%			
Reducing bullying, teasing or use of offensive language	41%	21%	28%	7%		3%
Raising awareness of teachers and administrators about what students with ID can contribute to the school	35%	35%	24%	3%	3%	
Helping promote leadership and advocacy skills among students without ID	35%	31%	28%	3%	3%	
Increasing participation of students without ID in school activities	28%	38%	28%	3%		3%
Increasing the opportunities for general education and special education teachers to work together	41%	28%	17%	10%	3%	

Project UNIFY funding dashboard


Special Olympics Michigan Project UNIFY



- Performance improving
- Performance staying about the same
- Performance declining

** Funding received from Special Olympics International Grant to Special Olympics Michigan Project UNIFY schools*

Michigan's Project UNIFY Report – Year 5

	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	Progress 
Total Amount awarded to Project UNIFY schools	\$85,000	\$80,000	\$186,000	\$157,000	\$120,000	
Average Start up cost per school					\$3,000	
Average maintenance cost per school					\$2,000	
Average cost per urban school					\$3,000	

